

**The history  
of Olivetti Showroom**

## The history of Olivetti Showroom

The Olivetti Showroom is located in the most important square in Venice: Saint Mark Square.

A showroom is where you can see and buy something you like and need.

This showroom is called Olivetti because Adriano Olivetti asked for it a lot of time ago.

In this Showroom people could see the typewriters and calculating machines created in the factory of Adriano Olivetti's family.

A factory is a building where people make objects.

A typewriter is a machine that writes a text on a paper in a short time.

Long time ago people used typewriters in the way we use computers nowadays.

A calculating machine can make very difficult calculations.

Long time ago people used calculating machine in the way we use calculators nowadays.

In fact a long time ago there were no computers or calculators.



The Olivetti Showroom is inside a very old building, where there was a bar before.

When Adriano Olivetti decided to open a Showroom in Venice, he asked to the architect Carlo Scarpa to renew the rooms of the bar.

The architect is the person that makes houses, buildings, churches and showrooms.

Carlo Scarpa was a very skilled architect and made an elegant showroom for Adriano Olivetti.

After a long time the Showroom closed and the rooms weren't used for many years.

A short time ago the Showroom was renovated.

To renovate means to clean or fix an object, a room or an old building.

When the Showroom was ready, FAI opened it.

FAI means Fondo Ambiente Italiano (National Trust for Italy).

FAI is a group of people who takes care of a number of Properties.

FAI Properties are villas, castles, woods and gardens.

FAI wants people to visit those special Properties.



Nowadays the Olivetti factory is closed and the typewriters and calculating machines are kept in the Showroom so that everyone can see them.

These objects are in the Showroom as artworks are in a museum.

A museum is a building that conserves artworks or important and beautiful objects so that people can see and study them.

The Olivetti machines became very important because they were the first typewriters and calculating machines to be made in Italy and sold all around the world.

Visiting this Showroom you can see which objects people used long time ago to write and calculate.

You can see how the objects change with the time.

Try to think of the difference between cars and houses of a long time ago and today.

Nowadays people can visit the Olivetti Showroom and discover its history thanks to FAI.

**What is  
Olivetti Showroom**

## What is Olivetti Showroom



Olivetti Showroom is in Saint Mark Square.

This is a beautiful square with buildings of long time ago.

Instead of Olivetti Showroom there was a small and dark bar a long time ago.

When Adriano Olivetti decided to open the Showroom here, he asked Carlo Scarpa to create a nice and bright place to visit.

As a matter of fact Adriano Olivetti wanted a special Showroom where he could show that his factory was big and important.

Adriano Olivetti thought that placing his typewriters into a nice Showroom could make them more precious.

That's why the Showroom needed to be as beautiful as the objects shown in it.

Adriano Olivetti wanted also that the people who walked around Saint Mark Square could notice his Showroom and get in.

For this reason Carlo Scarpa chose precious materials and elegant furniture.

The Olivetti Showroom is made of two floors overlooking Piazza San Marco.

Carlo Scarpa decided to make two big windows to let a lot of light enter the Showroom.

In fact, you can look at Saint Mark Square and its buildings through the windows.

People outside in the square can look at what is inside the Showroom as well.



wood



marble



bronze



coloured glass

Carlo Scarpa looked for precious and special materials for the Showroom, trying to put together new objects and shapes. Carlo Scarpa himself loved elegant and beautiful things.

Therefore he designed and made

- floors
- walls
- doors
- the staircase
- some new furniture, so that they could be unique and not like those you could see in other showrooms.

Carlo Scarpa used

- wood
- marble, that is a hard stone
- bronze, that is a metal with a golden colour
- coloured glass for the floor.

The floors are made with glass mosaics and each part of the Showroom has a different colour:

- red
- blue
- yellow
- white.

The mosaic is a drawing made with many stone or coloured glass cubes put one next to the other.

You can see mosaics on floors, walls and ceilings.

It is very difficult to make a mosaic and this is why it is very precious.

In the most beautiful palaces and churches in Venice there are many mosaics.

Carlo Scarpa decided to make the floors of the Showroom with the glass mosaic to recall the mosaics of Venice palaces.



The ground floor



## The ground floor



At the ground floor of the Olivetti Showroom there is the entrance. You can see a big sculpture next to it. The sculpture is made of bronze and has a round shape.

Alberto Viani made this sculpture a long time ago.

Alberto Viani was a very close friend of Carlo Scarpa.

He too worked in Venice like Carlo Scarpa.

Carlo Scarpa decided to put his sculpture in this place to make the entrance more beautiful and elegant.

This sculpture is on a fountain made with a piece of black marble.

If you look at it carefully, you can see some water under the sculpture.

Carlo Scarpa put this fountain here to recall the water flowing in Venice canals.



In the middle of the room you can see a big staircase in light marble that takes you to the first floor.

Some steps of this staircase are longer than the others towards the left side, others towards the right.

Some steps are larger and bigger than the others.

The steps are also very smooth but their sides are rough.

You can see the cut signs of the marble if you look at the staircase sideways.

Carlo Scarpa wanted a special staircase, and this is the reason why he made it so.

These are not the common stairs we normally use.

Pieces of metals hold together the steps and for this reason the staircase looks light and suspended even if it is in marble.

Suspended means that the stair does not lay on anything.



On the stairs you can see a calculating machine of a long time ago.

Be careful when you walk next to the stairs or up the steps.

On the left and on the right of the stairs you can see two wooden ceilings.

Over the two ceilings there are two walkways.

A walkway is an open corridor.



At the bottom of the Showroom you can see a big door called Water Door. This door is covered by a wooden grating. This grating looks like a wall made of wood pieces weaved together. Long time ago this door was used to make people carry in and out goods. The goods are things you can see in shops.



There is another secret door next to the area with books and notebooks. Ask the people with the badge to show it to you and to let you open it.

**The first floor**

## The first floor



You have to climb the stairs to get to the first floor.

There are two walkways, one on the left and one on the right of the stair. In the walkways you can look at some typewriters and some calculating machines. These objects are on small and tall tables made with wood and metal.



At the bottom of the walkways there are two windows, one on the left and the other on the right.

These windows are covered with wood gratings and are eye-shaped. From these windows you can see Saint Mark Square.



Try to get close to the windows and look at Saint Mark Square from here, it is beautiful to look at it from above.

You can also see some plants behind the armchairs.



Carlo Scarpa put water and plants in this Showroom to recall nature.

### **The Olivetti Showrooms worldwide**

Adriano Olivetti wanted to have Showrooms in the most important cities of the world, such as New York in America, London in Great Britain, Paris in France and Tokyo in Japan.

Adriano Olivetti wanted the Showrooms in these cities because he wanted that everyone could know the typewriters of his factory.

Adriano called some architects and famous artists to make these Showrooms. In fact there were artworks in every Showroom and each one was different from the others.

People entered the Olivetti Showrooms to see the typewriters but also how the Showrooms were made and decorated.

Nowadays only some Showrooms can be visited and the artworks have been moved to famous museums.

**Who was  
Adriano Olivetti**

## Who was Adriano Olivetti



Adriano Olivetti was the person who wanted the construction of this Showroom.

Adriano Olivetti was born long time ago in Ivrea, a city far from Venice.

The father of Adriano Olivetti owned a typewriters factory.

Adriano was an engineer and when he grew up he started to work in the factory of his father.

An engineer is a person who studies how to build houses, buildings, cars and several kinds of objects.

Adriano went to America, a very far country.

Here he saw very big factories that worked very well.

In America Adriano learnt to treat the people who worked with him properly.

If the people who work in a factory are happy, the factory works better.

Adriano thought that a happy person works better than a sad one, so he wanted his workers to be happy.

When Adriano came back home, he fixed new rules in its factory to make it bigger and as important as the American factories.

Adriano asked also for the construction of libraries with many books for the workers because he wanted them to be able to read and study.

Then he wanted baby day-cares to help the mothers who worked in the factory.



With the new rules the Olivetti factory started to produce typewriters that were nicer, smaller and lighter.

In fact, it was Olivetti who made the first portable typewriter.

A typewriter is portable when you can take it always with you.

After a long time the Olivetti factory started to produce also computers.

Many factory managers decided to apply the Olivetti rules.

The name of this kind of factory management is called industrial Humanism.

This means that the most important thing for a factory are the people who work in it.

Thanks to Adriano, the Olivetti factory became very famous around the world.



## Olivetti typewriters and calculating machines



A typewriter is an object of a long time ago.

A typewriter is used to write a text on a paper in a short time.

A typewriter has many keys that make a keyboard.

You can see a letter of the alphabet or a number or a symbol like a comma or a question mark on every key.

You can write the letter or the number or the symbol on the key on the paper by pushing it.



Pushing this key you write the letter C.

Writing with typewriters was faster than writing with pen.

Nowadays we use computers, which are faster than typewriters.

Computers have a keyboard like the typewriters but computers write on the display.

The Olivetti factory produced also calculating machines, which are like calculators.

They could make difficult calculations in a short time.

They were used in many offices and many shops and helped people counting properly.

People who worked in the Olivetti factory studied very much to produce the best typewriters and calculating machines.

For this reason nowadays you can see these objects in museums.

**Who was  
Carlo Scarpa**

## Who was Carlo Scarpa



Carlo Scarpa was the architect who designed this Showroom.

Carlo Scarpa was born in Venice a long time ago and was a very good architect. The architect is the person that designs and realizes houses, buildings, churches and showrooms.

Carlo Scarpa had already designed and furnished many spaces and important buildings before the Olivetti Showroom.

When you furnish you choose which furniture and objects to put in a house. Carlo Scarpa loved art very much and he furnished also some museums like the Gipsoteca Canoviana and the Sicily National Gallery.

A Gipsoteca is a museum where the artworks are made of chalk.

Through these works Carlo Scarpa learnt how to furnish museums and he was good in doing it.

For this reason Adriano Olivetti chose Carlo Scarpa to design the Showroom in Venice.

In fact, Adriano Olivetti wanted his Showroom to look like a museum.

Therefore Carlo Scarpa designed and realized the Showroom with precious materials and put the typewriters on small tables so that everybody could look at them. Carlo Scarpa put the typewriters in the Showroom in the same way artworks are shown in a museum.

Carlo Scarpa received many awards for his works.

**What is Saint Mark Square**

## What is Saint Mark Square



The Olivetti Showroom is in the most important and beautiful square in Venice, Saint Mark Square.

People built this square a long time ago and is the place where the people of Venice meet during the most popular celebrations of the city.

Here there are many important and elegant buildings, among which the most important business took place.

The most important building is Palazzo Ducale, the house of the Doge, the head of the city.

In the square you can see two very high columns.

On one of these columns there is a statue with the shape of a lion and on the other one there is the statue of Saint Theodore.

The lion was Saint Mark's animal and Saint Mark is the most important Saint in Venice.

Also Saint Theodore is an important saint for Venice.

A saint is a person who prays very much, makes good things and protects people and cities.

In Saint Mark Square there is also the most famous church in Venice:  
the Saint Mark Basilica.

People built this church long time ago and many people visit it nowadays too.

The Basilica is very elegant, with a big dome and a bell tower made of red bricks  
detached by the Basilica.

A dome is a roof in the shape of a circle cut in half.

There are beautiful gold precious mosaics inside the Basilica  
but also many statues and decorations made by very famous artists.

Many painters decided to paint Saint Mark Square because it is very beautiful.

In many museums you can see paintings showing Venice buildings and churches.

These paintings made Venice and its square very famous worldwide.